

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

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-----103440 220004Z /64
O 212300Z JAN 78 ZFF-4
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO USDEL SECRETARY IN ATHENS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0071

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 JERUSALEM 0197

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, XF, US, EG, IS
SUBJECT: ATHERTON/LEWIS MEETING WITH PRIME MINIUTER BEGIN--
SATURDAY, JAN 21--8:30 PM

1. AMBASSADOR LEWIS, DCM VIETS AND I HAD TWO HOURS THIS EVENING WITH BEGIN, DAYAN AND ATTORNEY GENERAL BARAK. WE WILL SEND YOU A FULL ACCONT TOMMORROW BUT WANT TO GIVE YOU THIS SUMMARY OF THE HIGHLIGHTS IMMEDIATELY.

2. BEGIN WAS THROUGHTOUT COMPOSED AND EXTREMELY ATTENTIVE TO MY DETAILED REPORT. HE SHOWED CONSIDERABLY LESS DESIRE TO SCORE DEBATING POINTS THAN USUAL IN SUCH MEETINGS AND SEEMED TO BE WEIGHING VERY SOBERLY THE DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN TOMORROW BY THE CABINET. DAYAN MOSTLY LISTENED AND TOWARD THE END WANTED CLEAR DELINEATION FROM ME AS TO WHICH OF THE MORE SENSITIVE PARTS OF MY REPORT SHOULD BE WITHWHELD FROM THE CABINET TO TRY TO AVOID LEAKS. SADAT'S SPEECH WAS STILL GOING ON DURING OUR MEETING; THEY HAD A FEW PRELIMINARY REPORTS ON IT, BUT BEGIN MADE CLEAR HE DID NOT WISH TO REACT TO THE SPEECH UNTIL HE HAD STUDIED THE
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FULL TEXT AND HE MADE THE SAME POINT TO THE PRESS AT THE CLOSE OF OUR MEETING.

3. I GAVE HIM A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF YOUR MEETING WITH SADAT, OMITTING ONLY SADAT'S INDICATION TO YOU THAT HE WOULD BE ASKING FOR AN AMERICAN SURVEY OF HIS MILITARY NEEDS. (LEWIS HAD BRIEFED DAYAN AFTER MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT ON YOUR PRELIMINARY REPORT OF

THE CONVERSATION, AND WE HAD GONE OVER IT IN ADVANCE AS WELL WITH EVRON THIS AFTERNOON. BEGIN HAD OBVIOUSLY HAD TIME THEREFORE TO THINK ABOUT SOME OF THESE POINTS BEFORE HE MET WITH US.)

4. BEGIN TOLD US THAT TOMORROW'S CABINET MEETING WILL BE ASKED TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO SEND WEIZMAN FOR MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETING IN CAIRO AND WHETHER OR NOT TO PURSUE NEGOTIATIONS OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE. BOTH HE AND DAYAN SAID THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE LATTER. WITH RESPECT TO MILITARY COMMITTEE MEETING, HE MADE IT CLEAR MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON REACTIONS TO THE ANALYSIS OF SADAT'S SPEECH. AS YOU HAD INSTRUCTED, I URGED THAT THEY PARTICIPATE IN THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, AND WE MADE THE POINT THAT THIS IN TURN WOULD INFLUENCE POSSIBILITIES OF CONTINUING WORK ON DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND PERHAPS BEGINNING OF WORK ON DRAFT PEACE TREATY.

5. I GOT ACROSS AS CLEARLY AS I COULD SADAT'S EMOTIONAL FIXATION WITH ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN SINAI AND STRONGLY URGED THAT ANY DISCUSSION OF THE FUTURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS IN RESUMED MILITARY COMMITTEE BE PUT ASIDE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. BEGIN WENT THROUGH A LENGTHY THOUGH SURPRISINGLY DISPASSIONATE RECOUNTING OF HOW THE SETTLEMENTS QUESTION EVOLVED IN VARIOUS EXCHANGES WITH THE EGYPTIANS BEGINNING WITH
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DAYAN MEETING WITH TUHAMI WELL BEFORE JERUSALEM. HE SEEMS SOMEWHAT BAFLED AS TO WHY SADAT DID NOT REACT MUCH EARLIER TO THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE IF INDEED IT IS SUCH A CENTRAL QUESTION FOR HIM NOW, THOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT THE PUBLICITY FACTOR WHICH BE BLAMED ON THE MEDIA WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A COMPLICATION. HE REAFFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT DECISION THAT THERE WOULD BE NO NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI BUT ALSO CONFIRMED THAT THERE WOULD BE CONTINUING ACTIVITY TO EXPAND EXISTING SETTLEMENTS, AND HE DID NOT SEEM INCLINED TO ACCEPT YOUR STRONG URGING TO CEASE ALL SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. DAYAN MADE CLEAR THAT IF THE EGYPTIANS DID NOT WISH TO DISCUSS THE SETTLEMENTS AT THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, THE ISRAELIS WILL BE HAPPY TO LEAVE IT OFF THE AGENDA.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JERUSALEM 0197

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

6. DURING MY RECOUNTING OF YOUR EXCHANGE WITH SADAT ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, BEGIN INTERRUPTED FOR THE ONLY TIME DURING MY LONG PRESENTATION TO ASK IF YOU HAD GIVEN SADAT A TEXT. I CONFIRMED THAT YOU HAD PROVIDED A TEXT BASED UPON YOUR UNDERSTANDINGS FOLLOWING YOUR LAST MEETING WITH BEGIN BUT HAD MADE CLEAR THAT THIS WAS NOT A TEXT THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED TO IN EVERY RESPECT. HE HAD HEARD A REPORT ON ABC FROM CAIRO THAT ALLEGED THAT HE HAD MADE AN IMPORTANT CONCESSION IN AGREEING TO THE PHRASE "A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM." HE WANTED ME TO CLARIFY THIS POINT IMMEDIATELY WITH YOU AND WITH SADAT SO AS TO PRECLUDE YET ANOTHER MISUNDERSTANDING AND INCREASE PROBLEMS BETWEEN HIM AND SADAT OVER ISSUES OF BAD FAITH. HE SAID HE HAD NOT AGREED TO THIS WORDING, BUT RATHER THAT HE HAD PROPOSED THE WORDING "A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIAN ARABS." AS WE DISCUSSED THIS, I SAID IT WAS INDEED MY RECOLLECTION (WHICH LEWIS CONFIRMED) THAT BEGIN HAD AGREED TO A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH 3 WITH THIS LATTER PHRASEOLOGY, AND THAT YOU HAD SAID YOU THOUGHT A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH 3 WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA AND THAT IT SHOULD READ "A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM." LEWIS AND I SAID IT WAS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THIS ISSUE HAD REMAINED UNRESOLVED BETWEEN YOU AND BEGIN AND THEREFORE IT WAS CORRECT TO
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SAY THAT HE HAD NOT ACCEPTED OUR PREFERRED LANGUAGE. IS SUMMED UP THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION BY NOTING THAT THERE WERE TWO QUESTIONS HERE: FIRST, THE QUESTION OF A SEPARATE GENERAL PARAGRAPH ABOUT THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, ON WHICH WE ALL SEEMED AGREED AND WHICH SADAT WELCOMED; AND SECONDLY, THE QUESTION OF HOW THAT PARAGRAPH WOULD BE FORMULATED WHICH STILL HAD TO BE NEGOTIATED.

7. AT THIS POINT, DAYAN INTERJECTED THAT DURING THE TRIP TO THE AIRPORT WITH YOUR FRIDAY MORNING, YOU HAD INDICATED THAT YOU THOUGHT WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE PHRASE "A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM," IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DELETE THE REFERENCE TO "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS" IN PARAGRAPH 5. DAYAN THOUGHT THIS WAS A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT SINCE ISRAEL COULD NEVER ACCEPT THE "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS" PHRASE. BEGIN MADE NO COMMENT, AND LEWIS AND I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT DAYAN WILL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE "PALESTINIAN PROBLEM" LANGUAGE -- BUT WE DO NOT HAVE ANY AGREEMENT ON IT YET.

8. IN HIS COMMENT ON MY ACCOUNT, BEGIN SPENT SOME TIME REFLECTING OUT LOUD ABOUT WHAT MAKES SADAT TICK. HE RECOUNTED THE HISTORY OF HIS MEETINGS WITH SADAT AND SADAT'S SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS, AND SEEMED GENUINELY BAFFLED ABOUT WHAT HE SAW AS CONTRADICTIONS AND INCONSISTENCIES. HE SAID AT ONE POINT THAT SADAT IS A CURIOUS MAN -- HE CAN DO GOOD THINGS -- OR OTHERWISE. AT ANOTHER POINT HE DESCRIBED SADAT AS WHIMSICAL.

9. IN MEETING WITH THE PRESS OUTSIDE BEGIN RESIDENCE AFTER OUR TALK, BEGIN WAS MARKEDLY RESTRAINED. SINCE HOWEVER WE NOTE THERE IS A NUMBER OF PERSONAL COMMENTS ABOUT BEGIN IN THE SADAT SPEECH, THIS RESTRAINT COULD WELL EVAPORATE OVERNIGHT. IN RESPONDING TO PRESS QUERIES, DURING WHICH I HAD REITERATED THAT THE DOOR TO PEACE WAS NOT CLOSED, BEGIN AVOIDED A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE SAME QUESTION, SAYING THAT I HAD BROUGHT IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM YOU,
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BUT THE NEXT STEP WAS TO SEE WHAT SADAT SAID IN HIS SPEECH AND WHAT WOULD BE DECIDED IN THE CABINET TOMMOROW. HE WAS AMUSED AT SADAT'S SUGGESTION THAT AFTER HIS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH, THERE SHOULD BE A PERIOD OF QUIET AND NO FURTHER PUBLIC EXCHANGES.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: RE PARA 6 ABOVE, BEGIN WAS QUITE CONCERNED THAT SADAT BE UNDER NO MISAPPREHENSION THAT HE (BEGIN) HAD ACCEPTED PHRASE "A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM" FOR THE NEW PARAGRAPH 3 IN THE DRAFT DECLARATION. I DO NOT KNOW HOW EXPLICITLY THIS WAS EXPLAINED TO SADAT BUT, IF YOU BELIEVE THERE COULD BE ANY QUESTION ON THIS SCORE, I RECOMMEND CLARIFYING IT TO SADAT IN VIEW OF BEGIN'S EXPLICIT REQUEST IN THIS REGARD.
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